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ABSTRACT

The goals of this nondiscriminatory assessment training model are presented in terms of training school psychologists to carry out their tasks with greater sensitivity to the needs of bilingual students and to work with the resources available within the school and the community. The two courses of an inservice program focusing on cultural-ethnic characteristics and its effects on classroom performance are detailed, in which a competency-based model is divided into instructional modules consisting of individual units. The evaluation procedure for the inservice program is also summarized, including an overview of the results which indicated that the major goals of the program were met. (JAC)

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INSERVICE TRAINING OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN NONDISCRIMINATORY ASSESSMENT OF BILINGUAL CHILDREN

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INSERVICE TRAINING OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
IN NONDISCRIMINATORY ASSESSMENT OF BILINGUAL CHILDREN

Under Federal Law 94-142, all children needing special education must receive these services and preferably in the regular classroom. In Massachusetts, Public Law Title V89-10 (Chapter 766), requires that a team evaluation process be used to insure that an appropriate educational program is prescribed for each child with special needs which is consistent with the Federal law.

Included in the population of children who are referred for evaluation are a large number of children whose first language is not English, or who have limited English-speaking proficiency. These children pose an unusual problem. It is often difficult to determine whether the problem being experienced by a particular child is due to a problem in language development (which often accompanies being reared in an environment where two languages are used) or to other kinds of handicaps such as neurological dysfunction or learning disabilities. The problem of properly assessing and diagnosing the specific difficulties of the bilingual child is compounded because the so-called "bilingual" child is probably not truly bilingual but in actuality may have a language handicap in either one or both languages as well as other problems which may bring him to the attention of the teacher or family.

There is still another factor that must be taken into account. We are not only confronted with a language handicap which may be affecting verbal performance, but we are also working with children who are bicultural as well as bilingual. A bilingual child may be in conflict not only with regard to language but also with regard to customs, values, and beliefs. How these conflicts actually affect cognitive style and behavior must be considered.

When a bilingual child is referred for evaluation, it is not always clear whether he is being referred because of specific educational needs as defined under the law, because of mental retardation, or because of a learning problem due to bilingualism. All too frequently these bilingual children are inappropriately tested and labeled as mentally retarded. This is well illustrated by the case of Diana V., California State Board of Education, in which nine Mexican-American children were improperly placed in classes for the mentally retarded on the basis of improperly administered and interpreted measures.

The Office of Children in Massachusetts conducted a study on the kinds of placement received by minority children under Chapter 766. In the report, titled "Double Jeopardy" (1978), communities are cited for discriminatory practices which resulted in a disproportionate number of minority ethnic students in various special needs categories.

In a survey conducted by the Office of Civil Rights in 1973, it was found that, in general, minority participation in educable mentally retarded (EMR) and other special education programs was much higher than nonminority participation in all regions of the country. The survey also indicated that minority children participated in EMR programs at a rate sixty-two percent higher than would be normally expected (Martin, 1976). Mercer (1971) studied the relationship between membership in an ethnic minority group and placement in classes for mentally retarded in public schools in Riverside, California and found that there were more Mexican-American children than Anglo-American recommended for placement in classes for the mentally retarded.

From the above data, it is apparent that there is an over-representation of minority children in special education and that many of these children are bicultural. One of the major contributing factors is the poor and inappropriate assessment that these children receive.

The appropriate and accurate assessment and evaluation of the bilingual child must take into account a number of variables that are not addressed when working with a monoglot child with special needs. These include knowledge of the language, the culture and the cognitive style of the child being assessed. Unfortunately, the person assessing the bilingual child often has little familiarity with the child's minority ethnic group. As a result, the evaluator may be unable to understand or interpret the child's behavior. The situation is further complicated when the evaluator has stereotypic attitudes or expectations about the child's minority ethnic group. Bernal (1975) in his response to the American Psychological Association Report on "Educational Uses of Tests with Disadvantaged Students" was critical of applied psychologists for their insensitivity to factors which bias test results, such as examiner bias, testing techniques, linguistic characteristics, cross-language interference, and test format.

There are very few bilingual psychologists trained in the area of assessment and evaluation and even fewer currently working within the public school system. No college or university programs have been designed to address the issue of bilingual assessment or to train bilingual psychologists appropriately for ethnic minority children especially those of limited English-speaking proficiency. There is also an absence of an appropriate or standard

method of assessing these children using techniques and measurements other than the current norm-referenced assessment practices. With the implementation of Chapter 766 and the large number of children with limited speaking proficiency, it became apparent that well-qualified bilingual psychologists were needed to carry out the mandates of the State and Federal laws. On May 1, 1976, a Statewide Bilingual Special Needs Symposium was conducted at Simmons in collaboration with Jamaica Plain High School which is a Boston Public School with a large proportion of Spanish-speaking students. The more than one hundred participants (bilingual teachers, consulting teachers, resource room teachers, speech pathologists, special education teachers, 776 area administrators) expressed a need for better methods of assessing and developing educational plans for the bilingual child with special needs and a specific need for bilingual psychologists.

On June 25, 1977, a conference on Planning and Implementation of Special Education to Children with Limited English-Speaking Ability was held at Simmons College. This conference was developed by the State Special Education Manpower Project Task Force to assess the needs in this area. Again, the participants expressed the need for trained psychologists to conduct assessments of children of limited English-speaking proficiency and the need for appropriate methods to carry out fair and meaningful evaluations.

It became painfully clear that there was a great need for properly trained psychologists. The ideal situation would be to train bilingual psychologists in assessment and evaluation and to develop a battery of appropriate instruments for the different ethnic minority group children requiring services. The real

world however, calls upon us to meet the needs of these children now. It is easy to suggest a moratorium on all testing but this would not guarantee services for the children in question. In fact there is a real possibility of evaluations and assessments which would reflect the attitudes, values, expectations and stereotypes of the many individuals who become involved in the evaluation process.

Since the ideal could not be actualized immediately, it was felt that it is necessary to reach those psychologists who are currently working in the public schools that do have large numbers of limited English-speaking children and to assist them in carrying out their role as psychologists in a nonbiased manner.

NONDISCRIMINATORY ASSESSMENT TRAINING MODEL

Goals

The primary goal of the program is to train school psychologists to carry out those tasks and services performed by psychologists with greater sensitivity and awareness of the needs of the child with limited English proficiency and thus provide nondiscriminatory evaluations and assessments in keeping with Federal Law 94-142. An additional goal of the program is to train the school psychologists to work with the resources within the school and community.

Objectives

This model program is partially funded by the Office of Education and is in its third year of funding. The objective of the program is to train three consecutive groups of twenty school psychologists from two metropolitan areas in Massachusetts with large ethnic minority populations. During the first year of

the program (1978-79) twenty school psychologists from the Metropolitan Boston Area received training in the program. During the second year (1979-80) a second group from the northeastern part of the state was in the program. This year (1980-81) the trainees are from Worcester, Massachusetts which is located in the western region of the state. During the current year, the program is partially supported by the Worcester Public Schools. The school system is paying for a portion of the tuition cost and also giving the trainees release time to participate in the program.

Methodology

The training occurs in the context of a series of two courses offered during the regular academic year. The classes meet for an equivalent of 36 semester hours for either four credits per course or for a certificate of participation in the program. The classes meet at a time which is convenient for the trainees to accommodate their working schedules.

The two graduate courses which constitute the major compnent of this model consist of integrated modules which are designed to cover specific content areas. The courses are taught by Simmons College faculty who have expertise in the relevant areas and by bilingual specialists. The faculty include a Chinese psychologist, Hispanic psychologist, Portuguese psychologist, Greek psychologist, Black psychologist, Hispanic speech pathologist, Hispanic special educator and learning disabilities specialists, Hispanic resource room teacher, a LAU expert, and a bilingual test specialist from the National Assessment and Dissemination Center. With the exception of the Simmons full-time faculty, the

bilingual specialists served as special lecturers who were brought in on a consultant basis.

The first course focuses on cultural-ethnic characteristics of different ethnic minority groups and on how these factors influence or affect classroom performance. It also examines attitudes, stereotypes and expectations concerning members of ethnic minority groups which may influence the assessor's interpretation and evaluation of them. The primary objective of this course is to provide the trainee with the ability to analyze the tasks which the child is expected to master, and the situation in which the child is asked to perform them from the child's cultural perspective.

The second course focuses on the application of the knowledge acquired in the first course, including techniques of assessment, the process of acquiring information and data, and appropriate methods and instruments needed to make judgements and decisions on these children. Also included in the course is the development of the necessary skills for prescribing and writing educational programs for ethnic minority children with special needs.

This model facilitates bringing these practitioners together to share materials and ideas, and through this process of sensitization to arrive at ways to solve the problems which they encounter in working with the bilingual or limited English proficient child who may have special needs not directly attributable to culture or language.

Another objective of this model is to encourage the trainees to share the information and skills acquired in the program with other personnel in their school system, especially those who are

directly or indirectly involved in the team evaluation process, such as the teacher, principal, chairperson, resource room teachers, and guidance counselors. Thus, they will serve as trainers in their school systems.

Role of Trainers

The Project Director is responsible for designing and implementing the program and for coordinating and maintaining continuity and integration of the units that constitute the modules. The special lecturers and Simmons College faculty are responsible for the formal class instruction. A Simmons College faculty member is also responsible for the evaluation of training activities in the formal class setting and in the field when necessary.

The description of the general role of the school psychologists developed by the task force for the certification of school psychologists including the duties, roles, and tasks of the school psychologist in the school systems of the Commonwealth was examined. The courses were designed to reflect this description and in addition, to enable the participants in this program to carry out the services described by the task force in a nondiscriminatory and nonbiased manner reflecting a sensitivity and understanding of the implications and possible differences in behavior and performance which can be attributed to cultural and ethnic experiences.

This is a compentency based model and an analysis of the tasks needed to enable the trainee to carry out their roles in the manner specified results in the following six areas of competency:

1. Knowledge of culture, values, language, and customary behavior patterns of different ethnic minority groups
2. Knowledge of the basic school acculturation needs of

ethnic minority group children

3. Knowledge of different cognitive styles and learning modes of ethnic minority group children
4. Knowledge of the standards for educational and psychological tests, and ethical standards of psychologists
5. Knowledge of resources and methods of obtaining information useful in providing services to ethnic minority group children
6. Knowledge and application of methods and techniques for assessment of ethnic minority group children, and development of appropriate educational plans

These competency areas are viewed as instructional modules. The modules are broken down into individual units under the competency areas and the enabling activities and criteria are specified. The enabling activities include lectures, readings, case studies, observations, testing under supervision when appropriate.

The first course is designed around the first three competency areas and the related instructional units. The second course is designed around the last three competency areas and the related instructional units. The competencies will be listed under the respective modules and the courses in which they will be covered.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST TRAINING COMPETENCIES
CORE COMPETENCIES

COURSE #1

Module 1: Knowledge of Culture, Values, Language, and Customary Behavior Patterns of Different Ethnic Minority Groups

1.1: The trainee will describe those cultural values and the language patterns which affect different ethnic minority group children's:

a. classroom performance
b. test performance

1.2: Given an actual case study or video tape recording of a child's behavior, the trainee will produce an interpretation of the child's behavior which is sensitive to and explicitly takes into account the child's membership in an ethnic minority group.

1.3: The trainee will describe at least four distinctive cultural characteristics of the community's ethnic minority groups.

Module 2: Knowledge of the Basic School Acculturation Needs of the Bilingual Child

2.1: Given a protocol or video taped interview, the trainee will accurately identify the student's school acculturation needs and present an argument (written or oral) supporting his/her views as to the ways in which these needs may be most efficiently met within the context of the educational system.

2.2: The trainee will describe the bilingual programs available in the school, the goals of these programs, and the professional concerns of the bilingual teachers, and how they relate to the school acculturation needs of the ethnic minority group children.

2.3: The trainee will describe the characteristic differences in the school acculturation needs of bilingual students from different ethnic minority groups.

Module 3: Knowledge of Different Cognitive Styles and Learning Modes of Ethnic Minority Group Children

3.1: The trainee will provide a summary of the predominant theories of cognitive development, identifying those theories of cognitive development that take into account what bilingualism imposes on the bilingual child.

3.2: The trainee will summarize the different kinds of cognitive styles observed in the bilingual child and describe how an educational cognitive style analysis can be used as a diagnostic-prescriptive tool when working with a bilingual child.

3.3: The trainee will identify, orally or in writin, the learning styles of the ethnic and minority groups studied and how these influence classroom and test performance.

Module 4: Knowledge of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests, and Ethical Standards of Psychologists

4.1: The trainee will state, orally or in writing, the responsibilities of psychologists, and describe the responsibilities of psychologists using psychological tests.

4.2: The trainee will describe what considerations must be taken in determining the appropriateness of using a particular test for an ethnic minority or limited English proficient child.

4.3: Given a list of various tests, the trainee will describe the conditions under which they would be applicable for use with an ethnic minority child.

Module 5: Knowledge of Resourses and Methods of Obtaining Information Useful in Providing Services to Ethnic Minority Group Children

5.1: The trainee will list, orally or in writing, at least five resources available in this geographic area, and describe how the information obtained can be used in the assessment of the ethnic minority group child.

5.2: In conducting an evaluation of a bilingual, limited English proficient child, the trainee will interview or consult with at least three bilingual people in the school or community to obtain information to carry out the assessment process.

5.3: The trainee will develop a general outline of services and agencies in the community which could be used by the trainee and others in providing support services to the ethnic minority group child.

Module 6: Knowledge and Application of Methods and Techniques for Assessment of Ethnic Minority Group Children, and Development of Appropriate Educational Plans

6.1: The trainee will develop an assessment model describing techniques and information gained from bilingual sources (teachers, aides, etc.) to overcome the nonapplicability of current assessment methods normally applied to majority students.

6.2: The trainee will describe how language, cognitive style, and cultural background can effect performance on a variety of standardized tests such as reading, intelligence, etc.

6.3: The trainee will develop an educational plan derived from the above modules.

Evaluation Design

The design for the evaluation of this project involves both internal and external evaluation components. The internal evaluation consists of assessing: (1) the attitudes and values of the trainees towards several minority ethnic groups, and (2) their knowledge of basic facts related to bilingual education, second

language acquisition and the law pertaining to childrer of limited English-speaking proficiency. A Pre and Post-Test method was used to determine whether any change had occurred over the course of the program. In addition to the above, at the end of each instructional unit, the trainees were given a questionnaire designed to evaluate that component of the course. The trainees assessed the objectives, the effectiveness of the instructors, and were also given the opportunity to make suggestions on how to improve the program.

The external evaluation was conducted by a consultant who examined the impact of the program on the trainees and the schools in which they practice. This evaluation consisted of analyzing and synthesizing the data obtained from the Pre and Post-Tests, from the Trainees' Module Evaluations, and by conducting interviews with trainees and their colleagues in the schools in which they both worked.

Evaluation Summary

An examination of the external evaluations conducted for the first two years of the program indicate that the major goals of the program were met. Trainees in the program did leave the program with an increased knowledge of the culture of the minority ethnic students studied in the program; they demonstrated greater understanding of the problems of limited English-speaking proficient students; better knowledge of the instruments, techniques and assessment methods that can be used in working with minority ethnic children. While one underlying objective of the program was to reduce stereotypical views of specific minority groups, it was recognized from the inception that this would be the most

difficult objective to realize. The findings of the Pre and Post-Test on Cultural Values and Attitudes indicate that some changes were effected but as expected these changes were not extreme in nature. One of the most important components of the external evaluation was the assessment of the broader impact of the program in the school. The report indicates that there was change in the attitudes of the trainees and how they approach assessments. Informal feedback has indicated that trainees have functioned with more awareness and sophistication in the team evaluation process and have been instrumental in sensitizing others in the team to issues relevant to the evaluation of minority children. In comparing the first and second year participants, the later participants were more actively engaged in training others. Most of the training was of an informal nature which included sharing course material with colleagues and asking questions of colleagues to have them see an issue or recognize a problem that they were not sensitive to before. Some of the second year participants have been engaged in more formal training involving workshops in their school systems.

The internal evaluation of the program which consisted primarily of the trainees' evaluations at the end of each Module were helpful and instrumental in providing information which led to several minor changes during the course of the program. The most substantial change made to accommodate the expressed needs of the trainees after the first year was the inclusion of an additional minority group (Black) to the curriculum.

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